

PART ANGEL, PART DEVIL

Numbers 22:16-18

Introduction: All of us know somebody who can "talk out of both sides of his/her mouth" at the same time. An expression that reveals that that kind of person can't be trusted for he/she will say one thing to one person and an entirely different thing to somebody else. There was a person like mentioned in the Old Testament named Balaam who at times seemed to be almost angelic and at other times almost like the devil. He walked daily with the Lord, was sought after by many to seek God's will and when he blessed something it was blessed and when he cursed something it was cursed. However, there was another side to him which wasn't godly, it was more of the devil. All of us are a bit like Balaam to some degree.

I. BALAAM'S ANGELIC SIDE

1. He was a very brilliant man.
 - He was a great poet, silver-tongued, a great speaker, was held in high esteem.
 - He had many abilities and was just short of being a genius.
2. He had a high opinion of righteousness.
 - *"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."*
 - What a great question, what a worthy answer, both by this man, Balaam.
3. He was a man of very genuine convictions.
 - He had a very definite and well defined idea of duty but sadly to almost every one of his convictions, he became untrue.
 - He did remain true to one of his vows although he broke the spirit of it.
4. He was very familiar with God and knew how to pray.
 - Israel was encamped on the borders of the land of Moab and the leaders of Moab were very disturbed and afraid. They came to Balaam and asked him to curse Israel for they knew that whomever Balaam cursed, they were cursed.
 - Balaam did pray and was told to not curse Israel for they were God's people, so Balaam sent the Moabite envoy back home with that answer. He obeyed God.

II. BALAAM'S NAME DOES NOT APPEAR ANYWHERE AS AN HONORED SAINT

1. Balaam is not counted as one of the heroes of the Lord but instead is sharply denounced.
2. What happened to this Godly appearing man that would cause him to be cast away and aside from those honorably mentioned in God's "list of great men and women?"

III. FOUR EVENTS IN BALAAM'S LIFE BROUGHT HIS DOWNFALL

1. The leaders of Moab sent another delegation to get Balaam to curse Israel.
 - The delegation was much larger and brought more riches and more honor to be given if he would curse Israel.
 - They asked him to let nothing detain nor hinder him from coming with them to curse Israel.
 - Balaam could have been final with them in very strong terms and words in reminding them that God had already told him to leave Israel alone.
 - He could have been insulted that they offered him more for if it was wrong when less had been offered, offering more would not change a thing, but he wasn't insulted and instead said *"I will ask the Lord again."*
 - Balaam began to wrestle with his conscience.
 - The first time he talked with God about it, he wanted to know what God wanted.
 - Now he is really asking God to let him go ahead and curse Israel.
 - He wants what he is being offered but he also wants to do what God wants.
 - He prays again and convinces himself that what he once thought was wrong is now alright.
 - Balaam determines to go with the Moabite envoy to their king.

2. Balaam leaves with the Moabite envoy.
 - God is angry with Balaam and sends an angel to stand in Balaam's way.
 - The ass Balaam is riding sees the angel, Balaam does not.
 - Balaam gets angry and whips the ass.
 - The ass crushes Balaam's foot against a wall.
 - In anger Balaam wanted to kill the ass.
 - Why is Balaam so angry at the ass he is riding?
 - We do the same thing. Get angry at things and slam doors, say unkind things, raise our voices whenever we have a guilty conscience.
 - *"There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked..."*
 - Balaam lost his temper, got his foot crushed because he disobeyed God.
 - The ass saw the angel and fell down.
 - Finally Balaam saw the angel and decides to go back but God tells him to go on.

3. Balaam arrives with the Moabite envoy.
 - He has seven altars built and offers seven sacrifices, reaffirming the vow he has always kept, that of saying only what God tells him to say at any cost.
 - He determines to speak God's truth as he sees it but at the same time he tries to keep from seeing the truth.
 - He sees the truth that Israel is blessed of God but moves the altar several times in hope of finding something wrong with Israel.
 - Who would deliberately try to blind him/herself to the truth of God? All of us have and still do at times. When we want something very much and it is plainly against what God wants for us, we will keep on until we have convinced ourselves that it is alright.

- What lengths will people go to ignore, turn the head, stop up their ears, close their eyes in order to have that which they want, asking no questions?
 - Balaam boasted of his honesty in always declaring the truth but he tried hard not to see the truth.
4. Balaam did keep his vow and had to leave Moab under the king's displeasure and loss of reward.
- Balaam still wanted the wealth and position promised but he could not disobey God.
 - Balaam, in leaving, told the king, " I cannot curse Israel myself, I have promised not to, BUT.....I can tell you how to make them curse themselves..."
 - The Moabites prepared a great feast and invited all the men of Israel to attend. As instructed, the women of Moab offered themselves to the men of Israel who had been in the wilderness and had not seen beautiful women such as these for a long time. Human nature took over.
 - God sent a plague upon Israel because of their sin and some 24,000 died. Balaam refused to curse them with his words, but cunningly caused them to curse themselves.
 - Balaam got his reward from the Moabites and he didn't have to violate God's Word.
 - He clung to the letter of God's Words but ignored the principle. He spoke the truth with his lips but lied in his heart.

IV. WHERE DID ALL THIS BRING BALAAM?

1. What became of this gifted genius who spoke for God? What happened to this man who prayed that he might die the death of the righteous?
 - He did not die the death of the righteous. He died the death of the wicked.
 - He died in the middle of a battle with a sword of an Israelite thrust through his heart.
 - He prayed to die the death of a righteous man, but he was not willing to live the life of a righteous man.
 - He loved the wages of unrighteousness and lost his life in his effort to win and keep them.

CONCLUSION:

1. God's Word stands. It does not change.
2. Anytime we try to bend or change God's Word to fit what we want it to say or mean will bring disaster upon us.
3. Our interests, actions and plans reveal the truth of our heart. Let us never do as Balaam and say what we think God wants us to say but do what we really want to do.